ment/lack of change or motion; temporal/eternal; exterior/interior. Many references and images pit reality against dimensions of dreams, unreality, emptiness, imagination, etc. Yet the lyrical flow of the prose emphasizes the elusive, poetic and highly personal nature of the first-person narrative.

The separate yet connected texts of the three characters are various pieces of a puzzle that fit together only at the end of the work through the reconciliation of past and present, of love and sacrifice, as revealed finally through Alma's acceptance of the solitude and emptiness which paradoxically open the door to love and to creative powers.

University of Kentucky MARGARET E. W. JONES

Carlos Blanco Aguinaga. *Un tiempo tuyo.* Madrid, Alfaguara, 1988, 122 pp.

Despite its unassuming title, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga's novel *Un tiempo tuyo* subliminally invites the reader to take part in the mute dialogue which is implicit in the novelist's use of the possessive «tuyo». Just as the intriguing and unidentified «tú» — you — spurs the reader's curiosity about the identity of the implied individual and the fictitious world in which (s)he dwells, the dialogic tú/yo modality serves as the basis for the structural underpinnings of the predominantly second-person narration. Within this sender-receptor framework also rest, it should be noted, numerous metaphysical ambiguities which deal with «tiempo» — time.

What, in effect, emerges almost immediately from this short novel is equally evasive. What seems to be a highly intimate second-person, stream of consciousness recanting in the first chapter of but another narrator's life, in future chapters turns into a shifting «narrative voice» which encompasses varied life experiences together with switches from male to female voices. The initial simplicity of the unnamed narrator's childlike focalization of his mother evolves into a cumbersome and disturbing narrative plotting of dense multiple-personality meanderings that culminate in an amalgam of memories, psychological queries, half-uttered references to names, events, dates and places, fragmented songs,

and unanswered questions which border on ontological schizophrenia.

Of the seven chapters which comprise the novel, chapters two through six bear as titles the names of their own narrative voices, while the first and last chapters have no titles precisely because they embody the voices of the two primary poles of dialogue which define the tú/yo of the novel: the child and the old man of what might cautiously be termed the extra-homodiegetic narrator. Interspersed after chapters one, two, five and six are short, italicized, one-page narrative interludes which highlight the major preoccupations of the preceeding and following chapters by means of emphasizing the motifs which contextualize each narrative voice's discourse: the «jungla» — jungle —, music and light. As such, they constitute the melodic counterpart of the narrators' voices themselves and symbolically poeticize the narrative trajectory which is also heavily weighted with references to various types of musical compositions. While each chapter seems exasperatingly disconnected and like the endproduct of a capriciously protean narrator, a close examination of the themes that arise from the individuals in question reveals that they have in common similar, albeit not identical, experiences, memories and obsessions.

In and of themselves, these narrators — Carmen, Klaus, Robert, Carlos Gardel, and the anonymous narrator himself — have vivid remembrances of their parents; they are all connoisseurs of music; they have struggled with their self-images and personal identifiers; and, lastly, they are incessantly preoccupied, if not altogether obsessed, with their mortality. As a result, they posess an ever-growing awareness that history and the continuum of time have entrapped them. Furthermore, all of them bear the burden of having lived through the First World War and, therefore, of being children of the *century of breakages* [1]. Because of this, they are painfully yet submissively aware of their own fragmentation which converges into a series of superimposed images that, we realize in the last chapter, exist in the mind of the extra-homodiegetic narrator who has reached the inauspicious old age that the child

[1] The underlined represents the reviewer's translations, 56. All subsequent translations will be so indicated and will be followed in parentheses by the page number from the original text.

in him had refused for so long to acknowledge as an inevitable port-of-call in man's journey through life.

Given the chronological parameters of each fictive space, it is not surprising to find that one form or another of violence has scarred each one of the characters. Similarly, however, the same violence which plunged them individually into a personal confrontation with their own families, cultural codes and contexts, and beliefs, left them with no other alternative but to admit to themselves that most of those things were but myths that had been handed down to them by the «Tribu» — Tribe —, better known as family, culture and/or society. Faced with the perplexities of their own lives, each one of them comes to the realization that it is only through fiction/invention, or better yet music and imagination, that knowledge, order and truth can be acquired, wherein *millions and millions of voices* (111) can be spoken and understood by people of all times.

In the last chapter the old man contemplates both exterior and interior landscapes which are but further fusions of previously heard narrative voices. Only now is it apropos for a third-person narrator to envision the old man as he goes swimming, takes a row boat out for a relaxed ride, and at last realizes that *each one of the voices that he listens to is just what it is, but all of them are his in the quietness of the present* (116). Gone are his — and his voices' — obsessions. He is finally at peace with himself, as he calmly floats — swims — into his own imaginative inner sanctum where all that matters is *reconstructing the dream letter by letter, however it comes out* (121). Or, as Rocío's voice reminds him: *continuity is built breakage after breakage* (110).

University of South Carolina LUCILE C. CHARLEBOIS

Mercedes Abad. *Felicidades conyugales.* Barcelona, Tusquets, 1989.

A juzgar por la avalancha editorial que ha sobrevenido al público lector, el cuento español contemporáneo tiene muchas facetas y está en manos de muchos narradores. A esta expansión se une el dato de que, hoy en día, el género «cuento» atraviesa a tres generaciones de escritores. Mercedes Abad pertenece, sin duda, a la de los más jóvenes. Se trata de una escritora barcelo-